

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 EUR-12 A-01 OPR-02

SY-05 ACDA-05 SCCT-01 ARA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 /098 W

----- 109441

O R 301750Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8076

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COTONOU 0155

ABIDJAN ALSO FOR DAO

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PROP, AN, DM, GV

SUBJ: BENIN TO SEND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OF "VOLUNTEERS" TO
ANGOLA

REF A - COTONOU 134, B - COTONOU 130, C - 75 COTONOU A-95

SUMMARY: PRES KEREKOU HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A BENINESE "EXPEDITIONARY" FORCE WILL BE FORMED AND SENT UNDER REGULAR ARMY OFFICERS TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE MPLA IN ANGOLA. ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AT MASS RALLY FOLLOWING INTENSIVE THREE DAY PROPAGANDA BUILD-UP ON ANGOLA. USG WAS THE PRIMWITARGET OF THE
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CAMPAIGN. KEREKOU'S ACTION IS PROBABLY DUE AT LEAST IN PART

TO SOVIET PERUASION, BUT SHOULD ALSO BE SEEN IN LIGHT OF MESSIANIC CHARACTER OF BENINESE MARXIST-LENINISM. EMBASSY HAS SOME DOUBTS WHETHER THE BENINESE FORCE WILL GET TO LUANDA. IF IT DOES, IT WILL NEED A LOT OF SOVIET-CUBAN LEADERSHIP AND PROTECTION. IF THE BENINESE INTERVENTION SCENARIO IS ACUTALLY CARRIED OUT, WE BELIEVE IT MIGHT HARM RATHER THAN BENEFIT THE KEREKOU REGIME. END SUMMARY.

1. AMB ADJIBADE'S ANTI-AMERICAN ADDRESS ON PRES KEREKOU'S BEHALF AT THE OAU SUMMIT IN ADDIS (REF B) AND BENIN OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL OF JAN 27 CRITICIZING AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD ANGOLA (REF A) BECAME BASIS FOR THREE-DAY PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN CULMINATING IN GOVT-ORGANIZED MASS RALLY YESTERDAY JAN 29. GOVT ORDERED ALL ESTABLISHMENTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INCLUDING SCHOOLS, CLOSED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON AND URGED EVERYONE TO ATTEND RALLY. THIS PUBLIC GATHERING WAS HARANGUED AT COTONOU LABOR CENTER BY LABOR LEADER AND NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBER ROMAIN VILON-GUEZO, WHO HAS LONG RECORD OF WFTU AFFILIATION AND COLLABORATION WITH SOVIETS.

2. PARTICIPANTS THEN MARCHED TO PRESIDENCY WHERE KEREKOU ADDRESSED THEM. HE DECLARED THAT "AFTER THE CRUSHING FAILURES OF IMPERIALISM IN ASIA (MEANING USG IN INDOCHINA AND KOREA) AND ELSEWHERE, THE FUTURE OF OUR...CONTINENT IS AT THE HEART OF THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF THE IMPERIALIST POWERS...ANGOLA IS THE NEW TESTING ROUND OF RECONQUEST AND OF NEW PARTITION INTO ZONES OF INFLUENCE...THE IMPERIALSIT MENANCE IN ANGOLA IS A MENANCE TO THE BENIN REVOLUTION...AFRICAN PEOPLES MUST REDOUBLE THEIR VIGILANCE AND STOP THE IMPERIALISTS' INVASION PLANS TO RECONQUER ANGOLA...THEREFORE BENIN MUST ASSIST ANGOLA BOTH MORALLY AND MATERIALLY. HE DECLARED FEB THIRD A DAY OF SUPPORT FOR THE MPLA DURING WHICH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND "COMMITTEES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION" THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WOULD RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT IN ANGOLA. AFTER HIS ADDRESS KEREKOU SAID THESE VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE LED IN ANGOLA BY REGULAR OFFICERS OF THE BENINESE ARMED FORCES.

3. THERE IS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT MIN OF INTERIOR AND INFORMATION/NATIONAL ORIENTATION LT MARTIN DOHOU AZONHIHO (A COMMUNIST) IS LEAVING TODAY FOR LUANDA. PRESUMABLY HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE ADVANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EXPEDIT-
IONARY FORCE.

4. DURING COURSE OF HIS MEETING WITH FORNMIN ALLADAYE THIS MORNING AMB ASKED HIM IS HE WISHED TO COMMENT ON BENIN GOVT'S DECISION TO SEND VOLUNTEERS TO ANGOLA. EMBASSY HAD TO REPORT THIS DEVELOPMENT OF COURSE AND WANTED TO BE SURE IT GOT THE THING STRAIGHT. ALLADAYE SAID BENIN'S ACTIONS IN REGARD TO

ANGOLA WERE BENIN'S BUSINESS. IF WE WANTED INFO WE COULD CHECK WITH THE WIRE SERVICES (FULL REPORT ON THAT CONVERSATION, ON SUBJECT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, FOLLOWS SEPTTEL).

5. COMMENT: WE SUSPECT SOVIETS HAVE PULLED THE WIRES FOR THIS MOVE, WHICH WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT PROPAGANDA COUP AND MIGHT STIMULATE SIMILAR GESTURES BY OTHER PRO-MPLA AFRICAN GOVTS. IT COULD ALSO COMPLICATE ANY ATTEMPTS TO ORGANIZE ANY "NEUTRAL" SORT OF OAU PEACEKEEPING FORCE.

6. BENIN GOVT NOW HAS SUCH CONTROL OVER ITS POPULATION THAT IT SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE MUSTERING A "VOLUNTEER" CONGINGENT, PARTICULARLY FROM AMONG THE URBAN UNEMPLOYED AND THE MILITANT GRASS-ROOTS FLOTSAM OF THE "PARTY". OF COURSE SMALL ARMY AND GENDARME UNITS CAN BE SENT AS "VOLUNTEERS". WE WOULD NOT EXPECT THE TOTAL FORCE TO BE VERY LARGE.

7. AS NOTED REF C, BENIN IS INCAPABLE OF WAGING WAR ITSELF. THE FEW OFFICERS CAPABLE OF EXERCISING EFFECTIVE COMMAND ARE IN PRISON OR IN NON-JOBS (ACTUALLY ONE OF THEM MIGHT BE SELECTED FOR THE COMMAND IN ORDER TO GET HIM OUT OF THE WAY). ANY BENINESE CONTINGENT IN ANGOLA WOULD REQUIRE SPECIAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION FROM SOVIETS AND CUBANS.
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SY-05 ACDA-05 SCCT-01 ARA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 /098 W

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O R 301750Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8077

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

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USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 COTONOU 0155

ABIDJAN ALSO FOR DAO

8. IN FACT THIS EXERCISE MAY BE STRICTLY A PROPAGANDA SHOW, TO PLEASE SOVIETS AND MPLA AND HELP SPUR FURTHER RECOGNITIONS OF MPLA AMONG AFRICAN STATES. KEREKOU MAY BELIEVE THAT, SINCE THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS ARE MAKING SO MUCH PROGRESS, THE WAR THERE WILL BE OVER BEFORE BENINESE BECOME ENGAGED.

9. PLUNGING ENTHUSIASTICALLY INTO A WAR MAY BRING SOME TEMPORARY DOMESTIC GAINS AMONG "PARTY MILITANTS" FOR THE KEREKOU REGIME, WHICH SEES ITSELF AS A MESSIANIC BEARER OF MARXIST-LENINIST TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. BUT IT IS BY NO MEANS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE BULK OF PUBLIC OPINION WILL SUPPORT THE IDEA OF A BENIN CONTINGENT FIGHTING
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IN A DISTANT COUNTRY ALONGSIDE RUSSIANS AND CUBANS. MOREOVER IN THE LONG TERM A BENINESE MILITARY ADVENTURE IN ANGOLA, IF IT INVOLVES MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF MEN, COULD CAUSE MUCH GRIEF AND INTERNAL DIVISION. IT COULD ALSO RAISE FURTHER DOUBTS ABOUT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY (WHICH IS TEADILY LOSING CONFIDENCE IN KEREKOU) AS WELL AS AMONG THE WESTERN GOVERNMENTS AND WESTERN-FINANCED FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE KEEPING BENIN AFLOAT.

10. WE WOULD CALL ATTENTION TO FACT THAT BENIN'S PROPAGANDA RE ANGOLA IS CONCENTRATED AGAINST USG. UNTIL FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS AGO BENIN SIMPLY LUMPED USG TOGETHER WITH FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY FOR CRITICISM AS "THE IMPERIALISTS." SINCE SEPTEMBER OR SO, PRESSURE AGAINST FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY HAS EASED CONSIDERABLY. IT IS NOW WE WHO ARE THE WHIPPING BOY FOR EVERYTHING BENIN'S MARXIST-LENINIST LEADERSHIP FINDS WRONG WITH THE WORLD.
END COMMENT.

11. ACTION RECOMMENDED: THAT USG GIN UP A LITTLE PSYWAR, STRESSING MORE THAN HERETOFORE THAT "VOLUNTEERS" WILL (A) JOIN OR FIGHT ALONGSIDE CUBAN UNITS, UNDER SOVIET ADVICE OR COMMAND, (B) KILL THEIR BLACK ANGOLAN BROTHERS, AND (C) HELP REESTABLISH WHITE IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA. BENINESE POPULATION, ALMOST COMPLETELY INSULATED, HAS LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF FACTS.

VOA COVERAGE OF ANGOLA THUS FAR, WHICH STRESSES US ADMINISTRATION'S
STRUGGLE WITH CONGRESS, ALLEGATIONS RE CIA, AND CONTRADICTORY
DECLARATIONS OF OTHER GOVERNMENTS, IS NOT RELEVANT OR CLEAR
ENOUGH FOR BENINESE UNDERSTANDING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, ALLIANCE, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976COTONO00155
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760036-0281
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976016/aaaaaelw.tel
Line Count: 228
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 COTONOU 134, 76 COTONOU 130
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <05 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENIN TO SEND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OF "VOLUNTEERS" TO ANGOLA
TAGS: PFOR, PROP, AN, DM, GV, MPLA, (KEREKOU, MATHIEU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006